

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE CABINET**

**WEDNESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 6.00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Councillors R. Hollingworth (Leader), Mrs. M. A. Sherrey JP (Deputy Leader), Dr. D. W. P. Booth JP, M. A. Bullivant and M. J. A. Webb

Officers: Ms. S. Hanley, Ms. J. Pickering, Ms. C. Flanagan, Mrs. S. Jones, Mr. M. Bough, Ms. D. Sunman and Ms. R. Cole.

27/12 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. B. Taylor.

An apology for absence due to illness was also received from the Chief Executive.

28/12 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor D. W. P. Booth and M. J. A. Webb each declared a Disclosable Interest in agenda item 8 relating to Bromsgrove District Housing Trust Strategic Asset Disposal to 2017, on the basis they are members of the BDHT Board as representatives of Bromsgrove District Council.

29/12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2012 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

30/12 **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 16th July 2012 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

31/12 **WORCESTERSHIRE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the meetings of the Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee held on 28th June 2012 and 11th July 2012 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that in each case the minutes be noted.

32/12 **SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

The minutes of the meeting of the Shared Services Board held on 12th July 2012 were submitted.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

(The recommendation contained within these minutes was considered at a later stage of the meeting as part of minute no. 45 /12)

33/12 **VERBAL UPDATES FROM THE LEADER AND/OR OTHER CABINET MEMBERS ON ANY RECENT MEETINGS ATTENDED IN AN EX-OFFICIO CAPACITY**

Councillor M. J. A. Webb reported that he had recently attended a meeting with the Chairman of Bromsgrove Sporting to discuss the Club's activities within the District.

34/12 **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT HOUSING TRUST STRATEGIC ASSET DISPOSAL TO 2017 REPORT**

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposed Development Programme of Bromsgrove District Housing Trust (BDHT) together with the Trust's Strategic Asset Disposal Strategy to 2017. The report advised Members of the implications of both the Development Programme and the Disposal Strategy and the impact of these on the delivery of affordable housing within the District.

It was noted that BDHT were seeking the Council's support for the Strategy prior to submission to the Homes and Community Agency (HCA). The Strategy included the disposal of up to 30 units of accommodation which would be likely to result in a loss of stock from rural areas within the District.

It was reported that HCA would expect the bid from BDHT to include resource contributions from other public bodies, these contributions could include the retention by BDHT of the full capital return on the disposal of stock with the total capital sum to be reinvested by BDHT in affordable housing. This would be a significant contribution by the Council as under the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer Agreement dated 29th March 2004, the Council was entitled to "claw back" 50% of the price received from disposal of such stock.

Members considered the situation in detail, in particular the potential loss of social housing within rural areas which needed to be balanced with the Council's priority to enable the development of affordable homes within the District. In view of the likelihood of there being no further grant available from the HCA after 2015, in order for BDHT to develop their target of an additional 200 affordable housing units between now and 2017 they would need a contribution of a sum of £4,000,000 from the sale of existing stock.

It was noted that sections 3.17 and 3.18 of the report outlined the measures which would be taken to mitigate the disproportionate loss of stock within the

rural areas. Members also took account the likely adverse impact on homelessness of the Welfare Reform proposals.

Following discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Business Plan/Development Programme which BDHT propose to submit to the HCA in which they seek the support of this Council for the delivery of an affordable homes programme to 2017 be noted; and
- (b) that the disposal of up to 30 units from BDHT's property stock up to a value of £4,000,000 be approved on the basis that the sum is reinvested into an affordable homes programme in Bromsgrove District in support of the Strategy.

35/12 **COUNTYWIDE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR WORCESTERSHIRE**

The Cabinet considered a report on a draft revised Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy.

It was noted that the Strategy which had been developed jointly by the six District Councils within Worcestershire, was required to consider how austerity measures could adversely impact on homelessness and what measures were appropriate to mitigate the impact of these. A Homelessness action plan for Bromsgrove to supplement the Strategy was currently being developed.

It was reported that a stakeholder event had been held in July 2011 which had been central to the development of the Strategy. This had been followed by a survey of both customers and stakeholders. It was noted that the promotion of partnership working with customers and other agencies was central to the strategy to achieve maximum efficiency in view of reductions in government funding.

Members felt that the Strategy was well written and it was

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the report be noted; and
- (b) that the draft Countywide Joint Homelessness Strategy and action plan attached to the report be approved and that delegated authority be given to the Deputy Chief Executive and the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing to agree any final minor changes to the Strategy arising from the consultation process.

36/12 **FLY POSTING POLICY REPORT**

The Cabinet considered a report on a proposed Fly Posting Enforcement Strategy.

It was noted that the Strategy consolidated the various legislation relating to the issue into one easily accessible document.

It was reported that in line with the approach taken on other environmental enforcement issues it was intended to adopt a “five stage” approach to enforcement ranging from providing advice to undertaking prosecution if that should prove to be necessary. It was also intended to undertake a public information exercise as part of the launch of the Strategy with a view to reducing the instances of fly posting prior to the five stage process.

Members raised the issue of fly posting in relation to local small scale charitable events and were informed that a common sense approach would be taken including provision of advice to organisers of such events that they ensure any advertisements are removed in a timely manner following the event.

**RECOMMENDED** that the Fly Posting Strategy together with the associated policies attached as an appendix to the report, be approved.

37/12 **LAND DISPOSAL POLICY REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report on a proposed Minor Land Disposal Policy together with associated fees and charges.

Whilst the Executive Director Finance and Corporate Resources already had authority to determine applications for the purchase and lease of small areas of land owned by the Council in accordance with the Assets Management Plan, the policy was intended to clarify the position, including the fees to be imposed. Clearly, applications which fell outside the policy would continue to be referred to Members for determination.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Minor Land Disposal Policy attached as an appendix to the report be approved, subject to the amendment of the wording in the second paragraph to read “the relevant Ward Member will be consulted accordingly” ; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Resources to progress any applications which fall within the Minor Land Disposal Policy and that the Scheme of Delegation be amended accordingly.

38/12 **FINANCE MONITORING - QUARTER 1 2012/2013**

The Cabinet considered a report on the Council’s financial position for April to June 2012.

It was noted that at the end of Quarter 1 there was an underspend of £25,000 in respect of the revenue budget. In relation to the overspend in respect of Environmental Services, it was noted this was due to lower income than projected and that an action plan to address this shortfall would be considered as part of the Quarter 2 report. In addition, in response to a query from Members, the Executive Director Finance and Corporate resources undertook to check the position on Planning Development Control fees.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that the current financial position in respect of revenue and capital as detailed in the report be noted;
- (b) that £50,000 be released from the ICT Refresh Reserves Budget and be approved for planned capital expenditure in respect of the purchase of XP Sunray Servers and additional corporate electronic storage capacity; and
- (c) that the virement detailed in the appendix to the report relating to the allocation of savings be approved.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that £70,000 from the revenue budget be approved for capital expenditure for the purchase of Sunray devices, Upgrade to Office 2010 and new ESX Servers; and
- (b) that the capital budget in respect of Sanders Park be increased by 35,000, to reflect the funding of £20,000 received from the County Council and the grant of £15,000 from the Rotary Club for the further improvement of the quality and range of facilities at the park.

39/12 **MONITORING OF WRITE OFFS - QUARTER 1 2012/2013**

Members considered a report on the action taken by officers in respect of the write off of debts during Quarter 1 of 2012/13.

There was discussion on the level and profile of the outstanding debt.

**RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

40/12 **LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REPORT**

The Cabinet considered a report on the proposals for Localisation of Council Tax Support and the need to undertake consultation with key stakeholders prior to implementation of the new scheme on 1st April 2013.

It was reported that from 2013/14 the Council would only be reimbursed 90% of the cost of granting Council Tax Benefit. If no action was taken, a shortfall of £61,000 would fall on the Council which would need to be met through other savings. The Council is required to adopt a new scheme for Council Tax Support by 31st January 2013.

It was noted that the Government had made some changes to the Council Tax Regulations and it was proposed that any savings made through these changes be utilised to offset the reduction in grant. The report outlined that the general approach which had been taken by the District Councils in Worcestershire was to attempt to meet half of the financial gap by way of the use of revisions to the Council Tax Exemptions currently available in order mitigate the impact of changes on residents.

It was noted that section 3.8 of the report set out the proposed changes which would form the basis of the necessary consultation with key stakeholders and partners such as Parish Councils, Citizens' Advice Bureau and Registered

Social Landlords. Taxpayers would also be invited to comment and press releases would publicise the draft scheme. It was noted that following the consultation period the scheme would need to be approved by Cabinet and Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a) that consultation on a Local Council Tax Support Scheme and technical reforms to Council Tax be undertaken with the public and key stakeholders for a minimum period of 8 weeks on the basis set out in the report; and
- (b) that it be noted that following the consultation period a further report on the Scheme and technical reforms will be submitted to Cabinet for recommendations to the Council .

41/12 **BUSINESS RATE POOLING BACKGROUND REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report on Government proposals for the local retention of Business Rates growth from April 2013 and the options for “pooling” business rates with other Authorities which would reduce the impact of volatility in rating income and generate growth through collaboration. It was anticipated that groups based around the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) could reinforce the LEP wide economic strategy. It was possible however to remain independent of a pool.

Members were reminded that Bromsgrove had previously expressed an interest in pooling with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP and the Worcestershire LEP as at the time expressions of interest had been required, a financial appraisal with comparison of the two LEPs had not been available.

It was reported that the timetable for decision on pooling arrangements had now been amended by Government and a decision was required by 10th September 2012. Information on the potential benefits and risks of participating in each LEP pool was considered by Cabinet.

Members felt that participation in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP offered a greater benefit to the Authority in terms of potential growth and economic development. It was recognised that the details of the impact of pooling arrangements would be dependent upon the terms of the Local Government Finance Settlement, which would not be available until December 2012 or January 2013.

Following detailed discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) that the Council participate in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP pool;
- (b) that it be noted that the detailed impact of the pooling arrangements will be dependent on the Local Government Finance Settlement for Bromsgrove which will not be available until December 2012 or January 2013 and that until this information is received a final decision will not be made; and

- (c) that recognising the situation outlined in (b) above, officers be tasked to work through the detailed financial impact of the pooling arrangements in the context of the financial settlement when received, and that in the light of this, the final decision in relation to the pooling arrangements be delegated to the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Group Leaders.

42/12 **BROMSGROVE PARTNERSHIP'S ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012**

Cabinet considered the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/12 which set out the work of the Partnership over the past twelve months.

**RESOLVED** that the Bromsgrove Partnership's Annual Report 2011/12 be approved.

43/12 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

That under Section 100 I of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business the subject of the following minutes on the grounds that they involve the disclosure of "Exempt Information" as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being as set out below and that it is in the public interest to do so.

<u>Minute No</u>	<u>Paragraph</u>
44/12	3
45/12	1 and 4

44/12 **BDHT STRATEGIC ASSET DISPOSAL TO 2017**

No further discussion was required on this item.

45/12 **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SHARED SERVICES BOARD HELD ON 12TH JULY 2012 AND 23RD AUGUST 2012**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Shared Services Board arising from the minutes of the meetings held on 12th July 2012 (Revenues – Shared Services Business Case) and 23rd August 2012 (Post Room Transformation and Service Redesign Review).

**Revenues – Shared Services Business Case**

**RECOMMENDED** that the business case for a shared Revenues Service be approved for implementation

**Post Room Transformation and Service Redesign Review**

**RECOMMENDED** that the Post Room Transformation and Service Redesign Review be approved.

Cabinet  
5th September 2012

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Chairman